

Lambda Letters Project

32598

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April, 1998

www.lambdaletters.org

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(916) 965-6851

Annual Meeting Fast Approaching

Lavender Library, Archives
and Cultural Exchange
Sacramento, CA

The fourth annual membership meeting of the Lambda Letters Project will be held on Saturday, May 9, 1998, in Sacramento at the Episcopal Cathedral, 2620 Capitol Avenue, Room C. The agenda will include a report on the accomplishments of the Project in 1997, approval of the 1998-99 budget (covering April 1, 1998, through March 31, 1999), the election of new board members, and other business that may properly come before the meeting. The meeting begins at 9:30 A.M. with coffee and doughnuts. The business meeting begins at 10:00 A.M.

If you feel that attending the annual membership meeting is not the best way to spend your Saturday morning, it's probably because you expect such meetings to be mired by difficult-to-follow parliamentary procedures. Believe us, our meetings are actually fun and can be quite educational! The board conducts its business in a relaxed and informal atmosphere. Before long, you'll appreciate the work that goes into running an organization such as the Lambda Letters Project.

If you can make it, great! If you are unable to attend, please *complete and return the proxy statement* enclosed with this newsletter. This is very important

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Surf's Up!

Do you love to surf the Internet? Are you fascinated by all the curious and wonderful things you find there? Do you get a sense of power from all you can do on the Web? How would you like to surf the Net for Lambda Letters?

Ever since its founding, Lambda Letters has depended on other civil rights groups and on legislator's staff to tell us what bills have been introduced, which ones we should be working on, and when we should be writing letters on them. We depended on other groups and staff because we couldn't afford the usual services that provide that information.

However, our dependence on other groups has been frustrating. Often their staff are not available when we call and many times they don't return our calls. It's usually not their fault. Like us, they are understaffed and overworked

Now the Internet gives us a way around this problem. All the necessary information is available on the Internet, at no cost to anyone. For example, you can find all the bills introduced by a particular legislator, or all bills dealing with a particular subject, such as HIV/AIDS. It's possible to get a list of bills that have certain keywords in the text of the bill. If you know a bill number, it's easy to find and print a copy of that

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

February, 1998	8,640 letters
In all of 1998	13,715 letters

Dollars Spent

February, 1998	\$1,268
In all of 1998	\$2,771

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Publication of the name of any person or organization in articles or advertising in the Lambda Letters Project newsletter is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person or organization.

Confidentiality

The Lambda Letters Project does not sell or loan its mailing list to anyone. We give no information about who is, or is not, a member of the Project. We do, occasionally, send mailings on behalf of other worthwhile organizations, but this is done by our own volunteers so that no other organization has the opportunity to copy our mailing lists.

The Lambda Letters Newsletter is published monthly except in December by the

Lambda Letters Project Inc.,

6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, CA 95608.

Postmaster: send address changes to the address above.

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Business-card sized ads (3½" x 2") \$10 per issue,
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*These cities share an office.

Change of Address Form

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Funding Breast Cancer Research, Prevention

by Carla Leek

Lambda Letters' recent member survey clearly indicated that among women's issues, women's health issues are top priority. Accordingly, this month's letter targets two Assembly bills related to breast cancer prevention and research.

A.B. 2592, introduced by Assemblymember Howard Wayne (D-San Diego), would use cigarette tax money to establish and fund a Breast Cancer Control Account and Breast Cancer Fund in the state's treasury for research, prevention, and treatment. The bill would give the funds a running start of \$20 million.

A.B. 2717, introduced by Assemblymember Elaine White Alquist (D-Santa Clara), is similar, in that it too would utilize cigarette tax money to fund its proposals. Alquist proposes a combined Breast Cancer and Prostate Cancer Prevention Fund, with revenues deposited in the account shared equally.

Each bill has good points that the other is missing, and both are following the same path through the Assembly. Accordingly, this month's letter requests support for both, while highlighting the standout points from each bill. Both bills are refreshing. Instead of being divisive by pitting men against women in a competition for funds, or ignoring the ever-increasing diversity of California, these bills are purposefully inclusive while proposing programs designed to prevent cancers that strike an alarming number of Americans.

Both bills can be viewed in their entirety on the Assembly's Web site at www.assembly.ca.gov. You can also link to them directly from the Lambda Letters Web site at www.lambdaletters.org.

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Opposing HIV Names Reporting

by Boyce Hinman

Recently the American Medical Association asked Assemblymember Don Perata (D-Oakland) to introduce legislation requiring medical professionals to report to public health authorities the names of people testing positive for HIV. The legislature's deadline for introducing new bills in 1998 was February 20th and so, normally, it would have been too late to introduce the bill. However, Perata plans to get around the deadline by taking another bill, A.B. 2120, gutting its original subject matter, and inserting wording to require names reporting. Assemblymember Perata is not the first legislator to use this ruse; however, his action does violate the rules and limitations that more principled people must live with.

The problem with names reporting is that it drives people away from HIV testing because of their fear of disclosure and the subsequent possible loss of their jobs and homes, and estrangement from their families. Given the imperfections of our government, and the continuing prejudice towards people with AIDS, this is not an unreasonable fear. For names reporting to be justified, its benefits must convincingly outweigh this detriment.

Some people say that people need not fear that their HIV status will become public. Yet in September, 1997, Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala recommended that Congress give law enforcement officials unlimited access, upon request, to all private medical records. Does anyone see a slippery slope?

Silence is the virtue of fools.

— Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

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Supporting Equal Opportunity

by Boyce Hinman

According to our survey this year, strengthened civil rights laws is one of the top priorities of Lambda Letters' members. Assembly Constitutional Amendment 3 (ACA 3) is designed to do just that and we urge you to write to the Assembly Judiciary Committee in support of this amendment. If ACA 3 is passed by two-thirds of each house of the state legislature, it will go before the voters, probably on the November ballot.

ACA 3 would allow the state to take any action—including the creation and implementation of any program it deems necessary—to promote and enhance equal access and opportunities for public education, public employment, and public contracting, commensurate with the state's diverse population and consistent with the United States Constitution.

For several years there has been a huge debate about whether or not anti-discrimination laws are even needed. We believe they are needed even more now than in the past. That's because many elected officials and others have been encouraging inter-group hatreds to further their own careers, and because discrimination is still very much alive.

Governor Wilson has built a career on arousing white voters' resentment of people of color and by crusading against some of the most effective laws and programs designed to protect them. He has won elections on the promise to end affirmative action and to deny education, necessary medical care, and other safety-net programs even to *legal* immigrants. These campaigns enflame, and prosper on, inter-group hatreds and they increase the occurrence of discrimination.

No matter what the governor and others say, opportunity is not equally available to all regardless of gender, race, or national origin. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1996 (the last year for which statis-

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*Lavender
Valentines*

Jeanne Barnett & Ellie Charlton
~ 14 years ~

Let us know when your anniversary occurs!

Insurance Coverage for Same-Sex Couples

by Hilary Cook

In California, the law already prohibits insurance companies from discriminating on the basis of either marital status or sexual orientation. Yet the reality is that many well-intentioned smaller employers cannot find a health insurance provider willing to cover the domestic partners of their employees. Either the price is much too high or the company refuses outright to provide it.

Health benefits to domestic partners of employees were first offered in the U.S. in 1984 by the city of Berkeley. Since that time, more than 500 employers have chosen to provide such benefits, including universities, cities, states, and such large companies as IBM, Apple, Disney, Time Warner, and Bank of America. At first some employers and insurers charged more for domestic partner coverage to offset the large increase in cost that they assumed would occur, but as these costs never materialized, so the surcharges were dropped. Nor has time borne out the claim by some that there would be a huge surge in fraudulent claims.

In the intervening time, a change in attitudes and the recently tighter job market mean that many employers are eager to provide good benefit packages to their employees, including domestic partner benefits. While larger employers—such as those mentioned above—have the bargaining power to get what they want, small employers have found many insurance companies and HMOs will not offer domestic partnership benefits on a par with the benefits they offer to spouses and dependents. (Kaiser Permanente is the notable exception.)

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Visit Our Exciting New Web Site!

Have you ever wished you could alter a sample letter we send you, but didn't want to retype the whole thing? Now you can! If you have Internet access, you can visit our new Web site and copy and paste an electronic copy of the letter into your word processor. Then just make the few changes you want, print the letter, sign it, and send it to us. It's that simple!

To locate the sample letters, simply go to www.lambdaletters.org and click on the subject that interests you, such as HIV/AIDS. Then click on the button marked "Sample letter." The sample letter will be displayed. Use your mouse to highlight the letter and then copy the letter using the Copy command (probably in your pull-down Edit menu).

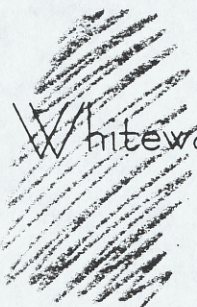
Next, go to your word-processing program and open a new file. Use the Paste command to place the copied letter into that file. Then you may personalize the letter as you wish and add your name and address. Print and sign the letter and return to Lambda Letters for counting and delivery.

Finding Legislators and Bills

Have you ever wondered who your legislators are? Links on our Web page will allow you to find out. You can also access the State Senate and Assembly home pages and the home pages of your legislators.

Have you ever read about a bill being heard in Congress or the state legislature and wished you could see a copy of it? Have you ever wanted to read a copy of a bill featured in our newsletter? Now you can. Lambda Letters' Web page has links that will help you find and print out copies of any bill in Congress or our state legislature.

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Insurance Coverage for Same-Sex Couples

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This occurs despite the fact that both the Unruh Civil Rights Act and existing insurance regulation would seem to prohibit such unfair practices.

This disparity particularly impacts same-sex couples who can't choose to marry, as well as many other committed unmarried couples. Many elderly people who choose to live together without marrying for practical reasons are also impacted by this disparity in coverage.

Carole Migden's (D-San Francisco) bill, A.B. 1059 would remedy this injustice. It does not tell employers what kind of insurance to buy; it merely ensures that insurance companies and HMOs that do offer coverage for dependents will offer employers comparable plans that also include domestic partner benefits. Please sign the letter urging your assembly-member to support A.B. 1059. You can read the bill's text in its entirety from the Lambda Letters Web site at www.lambdaletters.org.

E-mail Alerts and Links

Lambda Letters sends you letters on four bills per month. Sometimes, however, crucial bills are voted on between our mailings and fast input to our legislators is needed. When that happens, we send e-mail alerts to the people on our e-mail alert list. We also post the alerts along with sample letters on our Web page. Visit the site to read about fast-breaking issues.

Lambda Letters believes in coalition work. So our Web site includes links to other important civil rights organizations. You can access the Web sites of those organizations by using the links that we provide.

We think our new Web site is exciting and we hope it will become a powerful tool in the fight for equal rights for all people. We invite you to visit it and see for yourself. Happy surfing!

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Help Our Targeted Growth

Lambda Letters is seeking new members in the districts of state legislators who received grades of 50-70 percent on Lambda Letters' 1997 Score Card. The legislators who received very low scores are probably hopeless, while those who received very high scores presumably do not need additional attention from the community. However, we may improve the voting record of those legislators who received mid-range scores if we increase the flow of mail to them. New Lambda Letters members in these districts are needed to increase the flow of letters to these legislators.

We need your help in finding new members in the districts we have targeted. Please inspect the list of legislators and the counties they represent, shown at right. Do you have friends or family in the listed counties? If so, please tell them about Lambda Letters and ask them to join the Project. Your efforts may be just what is needed to make a moderately good legislator into a really good one. (Some counties are divided among two or more legislative districts. If so, you will find the county listed two or more times.)

Become an Advocate!

Become our people of color advocate and help us choose one subject a month (usually a piece of legislation) that is of concern to the people of color community. You'll spend only about 10-12 hours a month researching possible subjects and composing letters and articles. Do you have Internet access? Lambda Letters can provide leads on sources of information and advice on composing letters and articles. This exciting position enables you to have a direct impact on legislation that affects our daily lives.



Don't Know Who Represents You?
Just ask us and we'll send you a complete list
of your elected officials.



Targeted Assembly Districts

Fred Aguiar (R—Los Angeles, San Bernardino)
Jim Battin (R—Imperial, Riverside)
Jim Cuneen (R—Santa Clara, Santa Cruz)
Brooks Firestone (R—Santa Barbara, Ventura)
Peter Frusetta (R—Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz)
Jan Goldsmith (R—San Diego)
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Jim Morrissey (R—Orange)
Rod Pacheco (R—Riverside)
Robert M. Prenter (R—Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera)
Bernie Richter (R—Butte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, Sierra, Yuba)

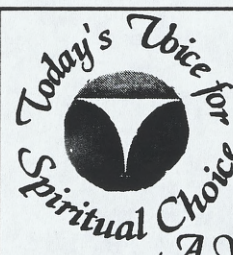
Targeted Senate Districts

William A. Craven (R—Orange, San Diego)
Ralph Dills (D—Los Angeles)
Tim Leslie (R—Alpine, Amadore, Butte, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sierra, Yuba)
Kenneth Maddy (R—Fresno, Kern, Tulare)
Richard K. Rainey (R—Alameda, Contra Costa)



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*A Wake Up Call to Wholeness
... to make a difference in the World*

Careful with Those Knees!

Many members of our community have a knee-jerk reaction when it comes to our feelings about elected officials. Often we simply assume that Democrats are good and Republicans are bad on our issues. However, the recent sad defeat of the gay rights law in Maine provides one more evidence of the fact that such assumptions may be simplistic and inaccurate.

Maine had a law on the books that prohibited sexual orientation-based discrimination. Early in March the voters of Maine overturned that law. However, the Republican governor of Maine, Angus King, Jr., was an outspoken supporter of the law. He urged Maine voters not to overturn it.

Former Republican governor William Weld of Massachusetts was also a strong supporter of the l/b/g/t community. Among other things, he supported our right to adopt children. As you may remember, he was nominated by President Clinton to an ambassadorship last year. Senator Jesse Helms killed the nomination, in part, because he objected to Governor Weld's position on our issues.

Closer to home, Republican State Senator Bruce McPherson got an overall rating of 77 percent on the Lambda Letters Score Card last year and a 72 percent rating on AIDS issues. Democratic California Assemblymember Carl Washington, on the other hand, received a score of zero percent on l/g/b/t issues.

Finally, President Clinton's record has been mixed at best. It is generally accepted among medical professionals who deal with HIV/AIDS that clean needle exchange is an essential tool in combating the spread of AIDS. Yet for political reasons the President has refused to allow the use of federal funds for this important effort.

Mr. Drummer Contest in Sacramento!

The Mr. Sacramento Drummer Contest will be held on May 9th at The Bolt, 2560 Boxwood St., Sacramento at 10 P.M. to benefit Positive Gourmet and Lambda Letters Project. Break out the leather and come join us for a good time. A Mr. Drummer is someone who represents the leather community, raises money for local charities, and competes in Drummer competitions. Anyone interested in becoming a contestant should contact Mike Butler at (916) 722-6301 or at mbutler@gvn.net.

As reported in this newsletter last month, there is widespread violation of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy by the military and the president is doing very little about it. That pernicious policy was enacted into law, and the law was signed by Clinton after his clumsy failure to deal with the issue of gays in the military. In addition, the president signed the insultingly named Defense of Marriage Act, which bans the recognition of same-sex marriage by the federal government and which attempts to allow states to refuse recognition to such marriages. Simply assuming that politicians from one party are good or bad for our community does a disservice to the community. In the present case, it allows the Democrats to take us for granted. They feel safe in doing nothing to assure our right to equal justice. It also ignores the efforts of those Republicans who seek to do the right thing, which may leave them asking themselves why they should bother helping us in the first place.

So be careful with those knees: try not to succumb to a knee-jerk reaction in support or opposition to any party label.

Deborah A. Brooks

Certified Public Accountant

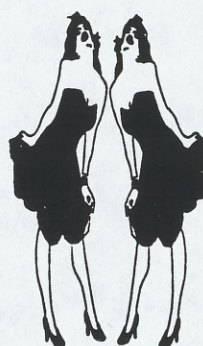


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Opposing HIV Names Reporting

Continued from page 3

The champions of names reporting claim it would allow state health departments to assure that all HIV-positive people get into care early and can take advantage of modern advances in HIV treatment. That argument ignores the fact that over 40.6 million Americans have no public or private health care coverage (According to *Statistical Abstract of the U.S.*, 1997). AIDS is increasing most rapidly among people of color, women, and people under the age of 25. These are the people least likely to have health insurance.

The AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) is a federally funded program that pays for HIV/AIDS medications. In 1996, however, no more than 14-28 percent of people qualified to receive ADAP assistance actually did. ADAP programs are going broke in many states and are unlikely to be able to fund care for additional detected HIV-positive people.

Other people say that names reporting is needed to facilitate contacting sex or needle-sharing partners who may have become infected. Actually it's the names of those partners that are needed, not the name of the person being tested. In a recent MESH study (Multi-State Evaluation of Surveillance of HIV) it was found that just as many partners were named by people visiting anonymous testing sites (where names aren't used to identify the person being tested) as at confidential testing sites (where names are collected).

In summary, there is little evidence that the benefits of HIV names reporting outweigh the possible detriments of the system. Furthermore, if this legislation is enacted, many people will choose not to be tested at all. Typically testing centers offer HIV/AIDS prevention training to those being tested. This gives those who test negative for HIV the facts and the motivation they need to stay negative. Without that benefit more people will engage in risky behavior and contract HIV.

A.B. 2120 is well intentioned but it is bad public health policy. Please write to your Assembly-member to oppose this bill. You can read the bill's text in its entirety from the Lambda Letters Web site at www.lambdaletters.org.

Supporting Equal Opportunity

Continued from page 4

tics are available) the median income for women working full time was \$23,710. For men it was \$32,144.

In that same year the median income for Hispanic households was \$24,906, while it was \$23,482 for black households and \$37,161 for white households. The disparity in these figures continues a long-term trend. Surely Hispanics and African Americans don't choose to earn less; it's the result of a lack of equal opportunity in education and employment. If you are Hispanic or black, you don't get the best schools and you don't get the best jobs.

The termination of programs to rectify the situation makes matters worse. For example, the University of California ended its affirmative action program and now minority enrollments are dropping significantly. The class of 1998 will be the first class admitted to UC Davis since the end of affirmative action. UCD reports it has sent acceptance letters to 23.5 percent fewer minorities this year than last year. They also say that the picture is clouded by the fact that there was a 177 percent jump in the number of accepted students who declined to state their ethnicity. Students may well believe that in this era of heightened racial antagonism the safest bet is simply to refuse to state their race.

We need a society that protects and nurtures all it people. We need strong civil rights laws like ACA 3. Please send a letter of support for this bill. You can read the bill's text in its entirety from the Lambda Letters Web site at www.lambdaletters.org.

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Annual Meeting Fast Approaching

Continued from page 1

because unless we have a quorum of one third of the members present—in person or by proxy—we cannot accomplish the important business of the meeting

Join the Board!

Do you wish to run for a seat on the board of directors of Lambda Letters? If so, send your name, phone number, and a brief biographical statement explaining why you want to join the board. We will publish your candidacy in the next Lambda Letters newsletter. Please submit your information by March 27th.

You (Probably) Qualify to Vote!

Anyone who is a member in good standing at the time of the annual meeting may vote at the meeting. According to guidelines adopted by the board of directors, a member in good standing is anyone who has returned one or more signed letters to Lambda Letters during February, March, or April 1998, who provided a minimum of three hours of volunteer service to the Project during those same months, or who made financial contributions to the Project during the twelve months prior to the meeting. Under these rules, almost anyone receiving this newsletter qualifies to vote at our annual meeting.

We hope you will attend and help make Lambda Letters a member-run organization. Please note that even if you send us your proxy, you will still be able to vote at the meeting should you decide to attend the meeting after all.

Surf's Up!

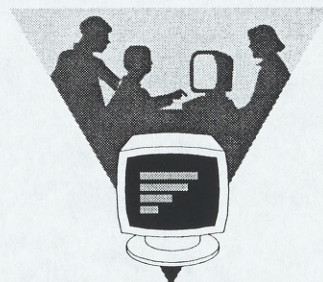
Continued from page 1

bill. You can also get information about when the bill is to be heard, in what committee, and what legislators sit on that committee.

The problem is that our legislative analysts have limited time. They aren't paid by Lambda Letters, and there is just so much time that they have to spend volunteering for us. One solution would be to gather a committee of people willing to spend a few hours each month surfing the Net looking for bills we should be working on and getting the necessary information about scheduled hearings on the bills, etc. They would then feed the information they get to our analysts.

If several people volunteered, it should really be possible to limit the hours of work needed from any one person. Since e-mail is fast and cheap, people from any part of the state could take part in the project. Lambda Letters can provide volunteers with a list of the important Internet sites and instructions on how to use them. A committee of this sort would give Lambda Letters a measure of independence that it has never had before. The Project would continue to increase and improve its services to the community.

So what do you say? Would you be willing to surf the Net for Lambda Letters? If so, send us a note with your signed letters or call us at (916) 965-6851. Even better, send a note to our e-mail address: LambdaLP@aol.com.



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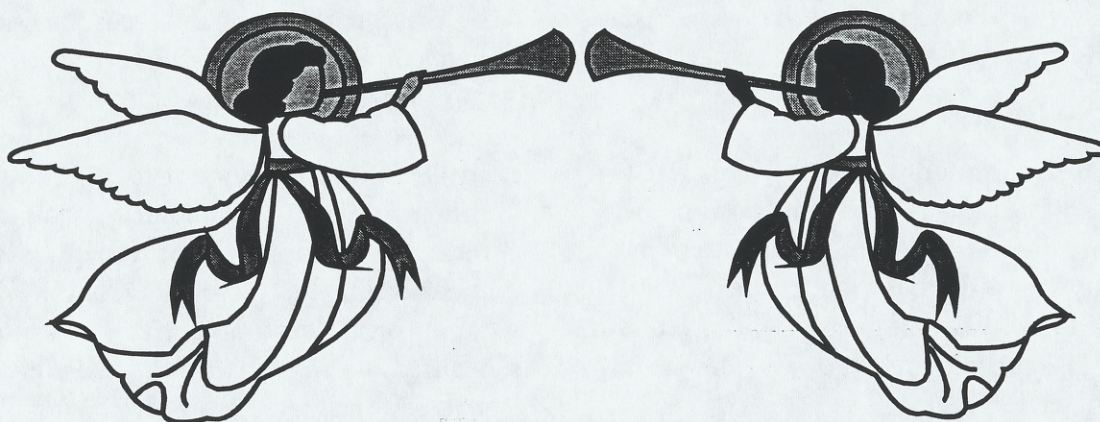
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Survey Results

We were gratified that over 340 people took the time to complete the annual member survey to tell us of their priorities on the issues and legislation that affect our lives. This was a 45% response rate, exceptionally high for such a survey. That gives us confidence that the following summary of the survey results is an accurate representation of the priorities of our members. We will use the survey results each month as we select the issues to be covered in each month's letters.

Thank you for your support of Lambda Letters.

HIV/AIDS Issues

	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Responses Male</u>	<u>Responses Female</u>	<u>Total Responses</u>
Funding for AIDS needs (e.g. research, prevention, and treatment)	2	101	123	238
Discrimination in housing and employment	5	61	94	175
Clean needle exchange		60	71	134
Anonymous HIV testing		61	61	136
Access to affordable health care	1	112	156	290
Access to affordable housing		34	64	105
Prevention programs focused on women, minorities and youth	3	67	128	209
Inexpensive or free access to prescription drugs	4	85	102	203
Assisted Suicide		23	38	73
Other _____				

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Issues

Domestic partner registration and benefits	4	93	135	249
State and federal recognition of same sex marriage	5	87	129	230
L/G/B/T youth rights and education (Including safe schools for queer youth)	1	109	144	274
Violence and hate crimes	3	102	140	263
State and federal legislation against discrimination in employment and housing.	2	115	138	274
Adoption/child custody/visitation rights		72	138	227
Other _____				

People of Color Issues

	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Responses Male</u>	<u>Responses Female</u>	<u>Total Responses</u>
Strengthened discrimination laws and enforcement in the absence of affirmative action	* 2-2	73	109	194
Violence and hate crimes	3-3	78	100	194
Anti-drug programs that center on treatment rather than punishment	5-5	66	89	170
Access to quality education (Better inner city schools)	1-1	91	137	245
Access to job training programs	4-4	66	104	185
Preserving the financial safety net for poor people		45	77	127
Inner city redevelopment		33	63	103
Access to culturally sensitive and affordable health care	-1	56	100	167
Other _____				

Women's Issues

Safe legal access to affordable abortions	** 3-2	77	124	214
Funding for women's health research (Including breast and ovarian cancer)	1-1	74	128	218
Improved access to health care for poor women	4-3	68	116	199
Preserving the financial safety net for poor women and women with children		51	95	155
Pay equity in the work place	5-5	68	107	188
Strengthened discrimination laws and enforcement in the absence of affirmative action		53	89	152
Domestic violence	2-4	83	115	216
Parental custody rights		23	41	72
Other _____				

* First number = over-all ranking, second number = ranking by people of color

** First number = over-all ranking, second number = ranking by women

Demographic Information
(Check more than one if applicable)

Sex: Male - 131

Female - 180

Transgendered - 4 N/S - 26

Ethnic group origin/identification

☐ White/Caucasian - 264

☐ African American - 1

☐ Latino(a)/Hispanic - 22

☐ Asian - 3

☐ Pacific Islander

☐ Native American - 2

☐ Mixed - 11

☐ Other (Please specify) _____

Do you have E-mail Yes No

If yes, what is your E-mail address(to alert you when immediate input to legislators is needed)
